

Data Warehouse: Your Gateway to the Information Age

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Many people consider data warehousing their gateway to the information age. The right approach to this process can deliver great rewards and bypass the pitfalls experienced by many. In this article, you will discover what a data warehouse is, why you should use one, and what steps should be involved when implementing one.

The concept of data warehouse has given new hope to providing a solution to the ever-increasing need for more information. A data warehouse is a collection of data designed to support management decision-making. It contains snapshots of summarized and extracted data from operating systems that are stored in a warehouse database system that provides flexible access to information. CASEware Technology Inc. has applied the technology of Computer Aided Software Engineering (CASE) tools and concepts to forge the way to implement the data warehouse.

Today, most corporations are finding the legacy systems of the '70s and '80s do not provide the path needed to compete in today's market. The technology available for development of these systems did not

allow them to be designed from a global view. As a result, the systems were highly specialized and focused on specific functional areas of the business such as finance, human resources, material management, etc. Information between these systems was not integrated or shared. As a result, individuals cannot access complete information. The age of interfaces grew out of the need for complete information. These interfaces, however, are very time consuming, complex, and difficult to change. New systems are even more difficult to implement because of the interface issues of unplugging the old system. As a result, old systems never go away.

When interfacing could not fulfill the need for more information, power users resorted to downloading data from the legacy systems to provide them with the

necessary information. In an isolated incident, this works fine. However, as the need for information increases, more and more information is required until these requirements become unmanageable. It is no wonder that as the need for more interfaces, downloads, reports, etc. increases that information systems soon became backlogged with no hope for digging out. This backlog of work prevents the information technology resources from focusing on providing new integrated systems, rather than increasing the complexity of the environment.

Due to space constraints, CrossTalk was not able to publish this article in its entirety. However, it can be viewed in this month's issue on our Web site at <www.stsc.hill.af.mil/crosstalk> along with back issues of CrossTalk.